

TEN POINTS FOR TEACHERS

by Virgil Morton

The Art of Teaching is a subject that could fill many volumes. The seeming simplicity of folk-dancing has often misled would-be-teachers into thinking that the mechanical demonstration of "steps" is all that is required in becoming a dance leader. This mistake usually leads to a disinterested reaction from the pupils and the class either disbands or turns into one in which "anything goes" becomes the keynote. The folk dance movement is in need of many qualified instructors, and the following list of points are given with the hope they will aid prospective teachers in this field. Many additional points will be discovered by the teacher as he gains experience, and the points listed are intended only to serve as a starting place. Most of these qualifications are simultaneous in their application, and are not necessarily given in order of importance.

1. TECHNICAL SKILL. This is the broadest and probably most important point. It includes the assumption that the teacher is thoroughly familiar with the dances to be taught, including the source of the dance, its place in dance history, related folk-legend and sociological background. Know the national dress and folk-music of the home country of the dance, and their influence upon it. A teacher must know how folk-dancing compares or differs with the other arts; must be able to distinguish between the ritualistic folk-dances, and the ethnological social dances and their individual styles; to know what deviations and variations may be permitted and still keep the dances "traditional". A sincere desire to preserve and perpetuate the dances of other lands is most vital. To teach the dances of more than one country obviously requires a broader knowledge than does the dance stylings of only one nation. The international dance teacher must be the "linguist" of the dance, requiring the same knowledge and skill to learn the dance arts of several nations as it would to learn the languages and dialects of the same nations. The beginning teacher will find himself less burned if he limits himself to dances of one region until he gains enough experience and background to add other nationalities. A good teacher must be versatile and dance well in demonstrating the various moods and styles, since pupils unconsciously copy the performance of their leaders.

2. FRIENDLINESS. A genuine enthusiasm in sharing knowledge with others, and a kindly attitude will aid in courteous cooperation and attention in a group. Even adult students will avoid an inharmonious class, and a feeling of superiority or frigidity on the part of the teacher will quickly quench the spirit of fellowship that should be present in folk-dancing.

3. PATIENCE. Many people come into folk-dancing with no previous dance experience, and consequently require a longer period to adjust to rhythm and coordination. The teacher should be able to view the class from the standpoint of the pupils, and not instruct too rapidly or too slowly for the form of the group. A word of encouragement is always appreciated.

4. FLEXIBILITY. Every individual and every group varies in personality. Methods of instruction or explanation that worked for one group may be totally lost upon another. A teacher must be imaginative enough to judge the group from the pupil's position and adjust to these differences by trying various methods in presenting dance material. Flexibility in technique is also required in re-creating the personalities and styles of different cultures.

5. SENSE OF HUMOR. Many folk-dances display a keen national sense of humor and satire. A group lea-

der will also find that a personal sense of humor toward situations that arise will keep himself and his group on an even keel. The teacher, however, must not mistake "fun" as being the total objective of folk-dancing, for that distorts the purpose and dignity of other objectives.

6. GOOD MANNERS. Vulgarity and bad-taste are never enjoyed by a group of people. A sincere smile, a well modulated voice, and personal cleanliness are vital assets to a popular teacher. The display of "artistic temperament" has long been out of fashion. Promptness in starting the class at the scheduled hour is an important point of etiquette; the pupil's time is often as valuable as that of the teacher. The leader sets the trend, and either good or bad manners will be emulated by the pupils.

7. CONSIDERATION and FAIRNESS. In folk-dancing, it should never be necessary to embarrass an individual by pointing him out either as a "bad" example. The bad dancer probably realizes his shortcomings much more than the instructor does, while the good dancer may become so self-conscious as to lose his incentive to dance. A teacher himself may demonstrate the "right" or "wrong" methods of a dance, and most pupils are capable of recognizing their mistakes and correcting them. An individual or a small portion of the group should not receive so much of the teacher's attention that the others feel neglected or unwanted.

8. BREVITY. Although such items as history, national costume, origin, etc., should be discussed by the teacher, a long-winded lecture or an over-long analysis of dance steps can become deadly. Reduce what you have to say to an efficient minimum.

9. PLANNING. Even the most experienced instructor will find classes learn more rapidly and operate more smoothly if he takes time in advance to organize his material. Dances may be grouped together to demonstrate the differences or similarity of technical steps or national characteristics. Classes with equally matched couples are rare, so plans should be made for numerous "partnerless" and "threesome" dances to give those without partners an opportunity to participate. Mixers and frequent changes of partners make a friendlier group. Planning should be elastic enough to allow for changes as the need arises.

10. FAITH. Faith in one's self as a teacher and faith in the ability of the class to learn is a positive requirement. This faith, or lack of it, will quickly be reflected in the attitude and response of a class. A leader should not teach a dance which he dislikes; there are enough dances that he can afford to be selective.

Balladmongers to Present Lith Spectacle:

The Balladmongers, a popular folkloric group from San Francisco under the direction of Grace West, plan to present a Lithuanian folkloric play this spring. The presentation is based on the Lithuanian legend "Lakštingalo Ir Radastas" (The Nightingale and the Rose), which Vytaus Beliajus translated and appears in his "Let's Be Merry." Many Lithuanian folk songs, folk dances and original creations will be employed in this spectacle to be held at "The Crossroads," a little theatre owned by Grace West. The group, for the past two years, specialized in such folk-ballad plays.

The "core" of the group consists of Grace West, an excellent musician and folk dancer, her children Lucy Ann, who is the costumist, Aner, accordionist and his wife Patty; Dick Lindauer, who is an excellent folk singer is the script man and stage setter while Gord Morse is in charge of the lighting effects. The cast consists of their well-trained folk dancers.

BRIEFLY

Olga Kulbitsky, Phys. Ed. instructor of Hunter's College, N. Y., wrote: "Attending the Caribbean Folk Dance Festival (Aug. 1-10). Am disappointed. It is theatrical, commercial and not what I hoped to see."

Mrs. Oscar Libaw, of Los Angeles, flew to Israel once again this summer. While there she instructed folk dances in various parts of the country and enjoyed herself immensely.

John "Ivo" Filcich, toured the West and was impressed by Denver and Colorado (Who aint?). He is a new and upcoming business man who runs a folk record shop at 3325 E. 14th St., Oakland 1, Cal. Yugoslav material is his specialty, but anything in folk stuff is obtainable. Good luck, Ivo.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Brooks, folk dance leaders of the Del-Pa-Nj area, left their lovely home town of Arden, Del., to see how the people in the Rockies, on the Pacific coast, and in Mexico live. They reported wonderful experiences and a wonderful vacation.

Mrs. Ruth Wright of Reedley, Calif., spent her summer vacation in Florida and a brief visit in the Windy City. To Mrs. Wright yours truly and the patients of Texas too, at Spivak, are extremely grateful for being remembered with fruits of the season for the second year now, which we all enjoy. Thanks millions, Ruth.

Mrs. Lillian Totten of Fairhope, Ala., spent a delightful visit with her son Edward, in Germany. Ed was graduated from the University of Chicago with highest honors in the field of Geology.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hungerford are now residents of Reno, Nevada. Regretfully they left Berkeley (Cal) and their hosts of friends behind, but a job is a job (to paraphrase Gertrude Stein). We suggest Georgia teaches "them" gay divorcees a few folk dances to keep those "poor soles" happy.

Jerry Joris, was interviewed over Chicago's WLS Station in connection with the Annual Square Dance Festival, which was held on Nov. 8th at the International Amphitheatre. Jerry spent seven weeks on vacation last summer. She attended the Stockton (Cal.) folk dance camp, visited Los Angeles, Colorado Springs and Denver. She left Denver with Lillian and Nancy Dulys who also spent a week in Colorado.

David Dubin, son of Len and Charlotte of Maywood, Ill., celebrated his Bar Mitzvah on August 30th and proud Mom and Dad took the occasion to throw quite a big party in David's honor. Zol Zein Mit Mazl!

Millie and Oscar Libaw, well loved Los Angeles folk dancers, were hosts to Dr. and Mrs. Solomon, of Spivak, Colo. During the Rosh HaShana holidays, when the latter visited that area on a brief vacation.

"Wittle Fishes All Over The Pwace:"

Until recently I was under the impression that the Loren Parkers (Mr. and Mrs. and son Jack) were "country gentlemen" and that Loren's hobby was square dance calling. All of which is true. But recently, the Wenatchee (Wash.) Journal carried a two-column front page story about the "true love hobby" of the Parkers. Hundred of little tropical fish are tenderly cared for in aquaria at their home. Betas, Gamas, Black Mollies, Sword Tails, Platys, Humming Birds, Zebras and what have you come from Ceylon, India, Venezuela, Siam and where have you.

Loren was at this hobby for 25 years now and supplies the stores of the Pacific Coast with the offsprings. To the Parkers yours truly is very grateful for the delicious cherries and apricots which he sent. We all enjoyed it.

Arden Johnson Back from Japan:

Lt. Arden Johnson, one of Minnesota's well loved dance leaders, is back in Minneapolis. Arden, a graduate of the University of Minnesota, was recalled into the Air Force last year and spent his time in Nippon directing recreational activities of the soldiers and meanwhile learning the Odori and Kabuki dances of the Japanese.

Emily Muchai n Tough Break:

"Po Lil Emily" was all set to leave Chicago for St. Louis to attend the National Folk Festival, when lo and behold, "she trips and goes down boom" and breaks a couple of ribs; so instead of St. Louis, it's a trip to the hospital. We were very saddened by the news, but happy to say she is back on her dancing feet. Emily is an excellent dancer and folk dance leader and last year she won first place in polka dancing at the Harvest Moon Festival sponsored by Chicago's Sun-Times Daily paper.

MEN IN UNIFORM

Lt. Bruce Bliss. During a dispatch received it was announced that on February 19th Bruce Bliss did not return from a flight over North Korea and was placed on the "Missing List." Bruce trained an ROK Artillery Battalion. After the review this battalion was rated "Highest in Performance." he is a person who owned one of the friendliest of personalities. He was graduated from the Brigham Young U. of Provo, Utah, and has also spent two years in the mission fields for the Mormon Church. He has a beautiful, charming red-headed wife and two lovely children, one of which was born after Bruce was reported missing. Lord has mercy!

Len Mickas, GMM3, member of the "Ateitis" group of Chicago, is at the present on the isle of Eniwetok. Before leaving he was home on leave and also took in some folk dancing in the Bay Area. When there he is the guest of Bill and Trudy Sorensen, of San Francisco, who showed him a grand time.

Lt. Wm. Rudin became a "second termer." The Navy couldn't get along without Bill and recalled him. He had to leave a beautiful wife, a cute brand new baby and a good job behind and go to Alaskan duty. Po' Bill.

Liudas Stukas is another po' soul who was sent to Alaska during August and is now anchored in Anchorage. Lou is quite an accomplished young man. A good Musician, has a wonderful voice and is a solo singer, and he is an excellent dancer and the star of the "Ruta" Lith folk dance group of Newark, N. J. His brother Jack is one of the outstanding young man of the Lith colonies in the US.

Fabian Dauzvardis, Ateitis dancer now with the Air Force, while home on leave from Malden Air Base, had as his guest Jaak Deriew, of Belgium, who was also being trained at Malden, Mo. Jaak enjoyed some excellent Lithuanian cooking at which are Fabe's mother excels. Fabe is now stationed in Texas.

John Tailor, ET3, a native of New Jersey, who while stationed at Great Lakes, did his dancing at the International House, is now in Hawaii doing plenty of the same.

On August 30, John married a beautiful Chinese lass from Hawaii, Edith by name. All your friends wish you Good Luck!